

Post 2/12/75
THE CIA: ONE POINT
IS PERFECTLY CLEAR

Whatever the extent of the CIA's reported surveillance of U.S. civilians — which is what President Ford's much-criticized blue-ribbon investigating panel is supposed to find out — there should be no question about the illegality of any such spying.

The "vague and loosely worded" 1947 statute creating the Central Intelligence Agency is the kind of stuff lawyers feed on. Yet it is clear that domestic intelligence activities by the agency are not authorized by federal law.

So states The Research Group, Inc., a legal research service for attorneys.

"We have researched the enabling legislation governing the CIA's operations, and while the statutes are vague and even loosely worded in parts, still the only interpretation possible is that the agency is barred from domestic intelligence activities," says James L. Arnold of The Research Group's Charlottesville, Va., office.

A federal law of July 26, 1947 gave the CIA power "to correlate and evaluate intelligence relating to national security" but stressed that "the agency shall have no police, subpoena, law-enforcement powers or internal-security functions."

Although the original law has been amended a number of times over the years, no expansion of the CIA's power was ever authorized. In fact, a 1949 amendment specifically limited the agency's scope to "the security of foreign intelligence activities of the United States."

Furthermore, says The Research Group, the CIA's exclusion from domestic affairs is noted in various other federal public health and welfare laws.